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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8167
INFO AMEMBASSY QUITO IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CARACAS 01331

QUITO PLEASE PASS TO GELBARD AND MCLEAN

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: PREL, MARR, PINR, PHUM, ASEC, SNAR, PGOV, VE
SUBJECT: PART 3: AFTER THE COUP ATTEMPT, FEBRUARY 7

REF: CARACAS 01156 AND PREVIOUS

1. C - ENTIRE TEXT

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2. CAP URGES FINANCING OF SOCIAL MEGA-PROJECTS:

ALL THE MAJOR NEWSPAPERS REPORTED THAT PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ HAD URGED HIS MINISTERS TO GO AHEAD AND COMPLETE THE PROJECTS THEY WERE WORKING ON. IN PARTICULAR, CAP URGED THEM TO COMPLETE WORK ON THE SOCIAL MEGA-PROJECT AND TO PREPARE LEGISLATION FOR ITS FINANCING TO BE SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS BY THE END OF THE MONTH. THE GOV ESTIMATES THAT THE FIRST PART OF THE PROJECT WILL COST 45 BILLION BOLIVARES (OR USD 72 MILLION) AND PROPOSES TO FINANCE IT THROUGH THE FUNDS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON
CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED
DATE/CASE ID: 02 AUG 2006 200503206

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OBTAINED FROM THE SELLING OF PUBLIC ENTERPRISES.
OVERALL COST OF THE SOCIAL MEGA-PROJECTS IS REPORTEDLY
USD 4 BILLION OVER A FIVE YEAR PERIOD; THE GOV PLANS TO
OBTAIN THE REQUIRED FINANCING FROM THE WORLD BANK, THE
INTER AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK AND THE PROCEEDS OF
PRIVATIZATION.

3. ACCION DEMOCRATICA PROPOSES A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY:

EL DIARIO DE CARACAS OF 02/7 QUOTES AN UNNAMED SOURCE
"HIGH UP IN AD" THAT THE LEADERSHIP OF ACCION
DEMOCRATICA AD) WILL PROPOSE TO CAP THE ESTABLISHMENT OF
A BROAD-BASED GOVERNMENT, ENCOMPASSING THE MAJOR
OPPOSITION PARTY COPEI, THE NGD, MAS, AND INDEPENDENTS.
AD HOPES THAT A GOVERNMENT OF THIS TYPE WILL ALLOW THE
PEREZ ADMINISTRATION (AND ACCION DEMOCRATICA) TO
"SOLIDIFY THE POLITICAL BASE THAT IT HAS LOST." THE
PAPER CLAIMS THAT ITS UNNAMED SOURCE ALSO BELIEVES THAT
THE RECENT COUP ATTEMPT HAS "SHAKEN THE BASES OF OUR
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POLITICAL SYSTEM".

4. CELLI DENOUNCES ATTEMPTS TO GLORIFY CHAVEZ:

AD PRESIDENT HUMBERTI CELLI IN STATEMENTS TO THE PRESS
QUESTIONED THE INTENTION OF SOME PEOPLE TO MAKE A HERO
OUT OF COUP LEADER HUGO CHAVEZ FRIAZ. HE NOTED THAT
"THERE CANNOT BE A COUP SOLUTION IN A PERFECT AND
PLURALIST SYSTEM LIKE WHAT WE HAVE", AND THAT, IF THE
MILITARY WANTS TO PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS, THEN THEY
SHOULD RESIGN FROM THE ARMED FORCES, FORM A POLITICAL
PARTY, AND BECOME INVOLVED IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS.
CELLI ALSO DENIED RUMORS THAT SOME AD LEADERS DURING THE
NIGHT OF THE COUP ATTEMPT WANTED TO OBTAIN "POLITICAL
ASYLUM," CLAIMING THAT THE PARTY'S LEADERS HISTORICALLY
HAVE PROVEN THEMSELVES IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST
DICTATORSHIP. CELLI ALSO CLARIFIED THAT HE WAS NOT ONE
OF THE TWO AD LEADERS WHOM RETIRED ARMY COMMANDER
GENERAL PENALOZA CLAIMED HE HAD INFORMED ABOUT THE
IMPENDING COUP.

5. POLLS INDICATE REJECTION OF CHAVEZ AND OF MILITARY COUPS IN VENEZUELA:

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EL NACIONAL ON 02/07 PUBLISHED A POLL REVEALING THAT 62 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION BELIEVED THAT COLONEL HUGO CHAVEZ FRIAS, LEADER OF THE FAILED COUP ATTEMPT, WAS "A MAD ADVENTURER" (UN LOCO AVENTURERO). HOWEVER, 14 PERCENT BELIEVED THAT THE COLONEL WAS A "PATRIOT." (NOTE: THIS POLL, AS IS USUALLY THE CASE HERE, WAS PROBABLY BASED ON TOO SMALL AND, PERHAPS, A NON-RANDOMLY

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CHOSEN SAMPLE, AND SO ITS RESULTS SHOULD NOT NECESSARILY BE CONSIDERED RELIABLE.)

A MERCANALISIS POLL OF JANUARY 1992 (CONDUCTED DURING THE PERIOD DECEMBER 9, 1991 TO JANUARY 8, 1992) PUBLISHED BY DIARIO DE CARACAS ON 02/7 REVEALED THAT 59 PERCENT OF VENEZUELANES DID NOT BELIEVE A COUP WAS POSSIBLE; 39 PERCENT THOUGHT ONE WAS, AND 10 PERCENT DID NOT KNOW. THE POLL WAS CONDUCTED IN ALL THE MAJOR CITIES OF THE COUNTRY; ITS BREAKDOWN BY THE LARGER CITIES SHOWS THAT A SURPRISING LARGE NUMBER OF CITIZENS BELIEVED A COUP WAS POSSIBLE:

-- MARACAY -- 42 PERCENT;

-- MARACAIBO -- 35 PERCENT;

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8168

INFO AMEMBASSY QUITO IMMEDIATE

USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 CARACAS 01331

QUITO PLEASE PASS TO GELBARD AND MCLEAN

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR

TAGS: PREL, MARR, PINR, PHUM, ASEC, SNAR, PGOV, VE

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-- CARACAS -- 32 PERCENT; AND,

-- VALENCIA -- 34 PERCENT.

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(NOTE: MERCANALISIS POLLS ARE USUALLY BASED ON SAMPLES SELECTED ONLY FROM THE COUNTRY'S LARGER CITIES AND SO ARE OF QUESTIONABLE STATISTICAL VALIDITY FOR THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE.)

6. FALL-OUT OF CALDERA SPEECH: HIS DEFENDERS' POSITIONS

EX-PRESIDENT RAFAEL CALDERA'S FEBRUARY 4 SPEECH ON THE FLOOR OF CONGRESS HAS ELICITED STRONG REACTIONS, INCLUDING THE CHARGE BY SOME THAT HE HAD OFFERED AN "APOLOGY FOR THE COUP." IN LIGHT OF THESE CRITICISMS, SOME CALDERA BACKERS HAVE COME OUT WITH THEIR OWN COMBATIVE STATEMENTS, CLAIMING THAT HIS SPEECH WAS AN ATTEMPT TO HAVE THE ALIENATED POLITICAL CLASS REFLECT ON THE NEED FOR SOLUTIONS TO THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS. THESE CALDERA SUPPORTERS INCLUDED:

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ASDRUBAL AGUIAR (FORMER DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS IN THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AFFAIRS): "ONLY A MAN WITHOUT PREJUDICE OR PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS, (A MAN) WHOM THE REPUBLIC WANTS IN ITS HEART OF HEART, COULD SAY WHAT CALDERA SAID. EDUARDO FERNANDEZ SHOULD NOT HAVE EXPRESSED DOUBT ABOUT THE EX-PRESIDENT'S DEMOCRATIC INTENTIONS. IN THIS DELICATE SITUATION, HE (FERNANDEZ) SHOULD HAVE CONTROLLED HIS IMPATIENT AMBITION AND IDENTIFIED HIMSELF WITH CALDERA, FOR HE (CALDERA) SAID WHAT THE PEOPLE WANTED HIM TO SAY. IT IS EVIDENT THAT EDUARDO FERNANDEZ COULD NOT SAY THIS."

FERNANDO EGANA (IN RESPONSE TO GERVER TORRES' COMMENT THAT CALDERA'S SPEECH WAS "OPPORTUNISTIC AND
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IRRESPONSIBLE"): "THE ARROGANCE OF MINISTER TORRES IS PART OF THE DANGEROUS ENTOURAGE (ENTORNO) THAT CALDERA DENOUNCED IN HIS DRAMATIC CALL TO PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ AND THE POLITICAL CLASS FOR RECTIFICATION. WHAT THE COUNTRY IS TIRED OF IS (PRECISELY) THESE ARROGANT TECHNOCRATS WHO BELIEVE THEY ALWAYS HAVE THE TRUTH IN THEIR POCKETS AND DO NOT NEED CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM." EGANA ALSO CLAIMED THAT "CALDERA DID NOT REJECT PRIVATIZATION AS A CONCEPT, BUT DID (REJECT) FREE-BEES (ENTREGUISMO), SINCE THE INTENT OF THE PROCESS OF PRIVATIZATION MUST BE TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SERVICES, NOT SIMPLY TO MAKE STATE PROPERTY PRIVATE, OR NATIONAL (PROPERTY) FOREIGN."

7. UNITED AIRLINES DENIES THAT IT STOPPED FLIGHTS TO CARACAS:

UNITED AIRLINES TOLD THE EMBASSY THAT IT DID NOT STOP ANY OF ITS FLIGHTS TO CARACAS. ALL THREE MAJOR VENEZUELAN DAILIES REPORTED THAT UNITED HAD STOPPED ITS FLIGHTS UNTIL THE COMPANY DETERMINED THAT THE COUNTRY WAS STABLE.

8. GOV SEIZES MAGAZINE:

IN A SURPRISE MOVE, ON 02/06 THE INTELLIGENCE POLICE (DISIP) RAIDED THE OFFICES OF THE WEEKLY MAGAZINE ZETA (EDITED BY RAFAEL POLEO) AND SEIZED ALL REMAINING COPIES OF THE LATEST ISSUE. APPARENTLY, THE GOV WAS UPSET ABOUT THE COVER OF THE MAGAZINE -- A FULL-BLOWN PICTURE

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OF COUP LEADER COLONEL HUGO CHAVEZ FRIAS. THE PRESS
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REPORTS THAT THE POLICE SEIZED 80-SOME COPIES AND WERE
ALSO ATTEMPTING TO SEIZE ALL COPIES AT NEWS STANDS.
CRITICS POINT OUT THAT IT DOES NOT MAKE SENSE TO SEIZE A
MAGAZINE BECAUSE OF A PICTURE OF CHAVEZ ON ITS COVER
WHEN THE GOVERNMENT SHOWED THE COLONEL ON TELEVISION
DURING THE BETTER PART OF FEBRUARY 5 TO COUNTERACT
RUMORS THAT HE HAD COMMITTED SUICIDE. THE GOVERNMENT'S
ACTION AGAINST ZETA WAS IMMEDIATELY CONDEMNED BY THE
PRINCIPAL OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES, WHO INDICATED
THAT THEY WOULD REQUEST THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE TO
DETERMINE WHETHER THE EXECUTIVE HAD PROVED "THAT SUCH
PRINTED MATERIAL WAS SUBVERSIVE." ONE NEWSPAPER ALSO
REPORTED THAT THE POLICE HAD RAIDED THE OFFICES OF
SISTER PUBLICATION "EL NUEVO PAIS." (NOTE: THE LEGAL
SUSPENSION OF CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES, INCLUDING
FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ON FEBRUARY 4 GIVES THE
GOVERNMENT THE LEGAL RIGHT TO DO JUST WHAT IT DID IN THE
CASE OF ZETA AND EL NUEVO DIARIO. THE ATTEMPTED COUP

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 CARACAS 01331

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AND THE LEGAL SUSPENSION OF CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES
NOTWITHSTANDING, SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THE
GOVERNMENT MOVED AGAINST THESE PUBLICATIONS FOR
POLITICAL REASONS, I.E., TO SETTLE A PENDING SCORE
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AGAINST THEIR PUBLISHER RAFAEL POLEO.)

9. RETIRED OFFICERS BLAST THE GOVERNMENT:

IN A FULL-PAGE AD APPEARING IN THE MEDIA FEBRUARY 7, AN
ORGANIZATION OF RETIRED ARMY OFFICERS "PROFOUNDLY
DEPLORES THE ACTIONS OF FEBRUARY 4", BUT THEN CLAIMS
THAT "THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH...HAS VIOLATED THE
CONSTITUTIONAL POSTULATES GOVERNING THE DEMOCRATIC
SYSTEM. IN EFFECT, THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH HAS
DEMONSTRATED AN...INCAPACITY, NOT ONLY TO PROVIDE FOR
THE MINIMAL SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF OUR PEOPLE, BUT ALSO,
IN ITS TIMID IMPRUDENCE, TO DEFEND OUR VITAL INTERESTS
IN THE GULF OF VENEZUELA. THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH HAS
BEEN INCAPABLE OF FAITHFULLY INTERPRETING THE TRUE
ASPIRATIONS OF THE PEOPLE WHO ELECTED THEM; AND THE
JUDICIAL BRANCH HAS CHARACTERIZED ITSELF BY
ADMINISTERING "INJUSTICE" IN THE NAME OF EQUITY, THUS
FRUSTRATING THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE PEOPLE, ANXIOUS FOR
ORDER AND JUSTICE."

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10. HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO HEED
IMPLICATIONS OF ATTEMPTED COUP:

A NUMBER OF LOCAL HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS IN A PRESS
RELEASE EXPRESSED "THEIR FIRM AND DEFINITIVE
CONDEMNATION OF THE INTENT TO STOP BY FORCE THE
CONSTITUTIONAL REGIME. WE ARE OF THE OPINION THAT ...
THE ACTIONS OF A FEW SAVIOURS WHO DESPISE DEMOCRATIC
PARTICIPATION AND POPULAR SUPPORT CANNOT RESULT IN A
SOLUTION OR ... IMPROVE THE SITUATION WHICH THE COUNTRY

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IS EXPERIENCING." THE HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS, HOWEVER,
BELIEVE THAT THE EVENTS OF FEBRUARY 4 "ARE A CALL FOR
THE ATTENTION OF THE NATIONAL POLITICAL LEADERSHIP,
SINCE IT (THE COUP ATTEMPT) EXPRESSES THE GENERAL
DISCONTENT OF LARGE SECTORS OF THE SOCIETY WITH A
DEMOCRATIC REGIME DEVOID OF CONTENT (UN REGIMEN
DEMOCRATICO VACIADO DE CONTENIDO)."

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